



TIME FOR AN EU Blue Deal

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), a consultative body of the European Union (EU), is working on water as a cross-cutting theme in 2023. Its aim is to raise awareness and bring the topic higher on the EU agenda via a call for an “EU Blue Deal”.

The EESC will adopt a set of own-initiative opinions, addressing the topic from sectoral perspectives and making concrete proposals with a view to building a comprehensive approach to European water policies. These proposals will be summarised in a Declaration to be handed over to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union at the high-level conference “Call for an EU Blue Deal” in October 2023, during the Spanish EU Council presidency.

Water is a vital but increasingly scarce resource. The EU has anticipated water-related challenges to a certain extent, setting up legal frameworks for the protection and management of our freshwater and marine resources. However, many of these objectives have not been reached, largely due to lack of funding, slow implementation and insufficient integration of environmental objectives in sectoral policies, and the water dimension is not sufficiently embedded in public and private decision making.

Considering the challenges at stake, the current EU policy framework is not fit for purpose. In its recent resolution, the European Parliament called on the European Commission to present a comprehensive EU water strategy¹. **A change of scale is indeed urgently needed.**

The EESC wants to call on other EU institutions to start addressing water as a priority at European scale, putting its mission to “ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground” at the service of a cause that heavily impacts European citizens and the generations to come.

To be able to address and mitigate the consequences of a future water crisis, the “EU Blue Deal” needs to be comprehensive, covering the different challenges at stake. Over the course of 2023, the EESC is working on delivering concrete proposals, addressing the following key themes:

- **Access to water and geopolitics of water:** with a focus on safeguarding clean and adequate water resources and accelerating work on access to water globally. As unequal access to clean and affordable water is heavily impacting social instability and as such reshaping global geopolitics, attention will be given to anticipating and mitigating possible negative effects of increased migration and international conflicts caused by water-related issues.
- **Sustainable water management:** the focus will be on how to reduce water consumption and better manage water and waste water used and produced by households, public administration, agriculture and industries, notably water-intensive ones. Water-efficient technologies and EU water distribution networks will be analysed from the triple perspective of efficiency, sustainability and resilience.
- **Economics of a Blue Deal for the EU:** focus will be on the investment needs for a sustainable, competitive and fair “blue transition” in Europe and how to address water poverty resulting from an increase in prices due to scarce resources.

¹ [European Parliament’s resolution on Consequences of drought, fire, and other extreme weather phenomena: increasing EU’s efforts to fight climate change – 15 September 2022.](#)

On 27 February 2023, the high-level hearing on water policies and challenges - Time for a Blue Deal set the scene for the EESC's work on the Blue Deal. Top water experts from organisations in Europe and beyond discussed the most pressing water-related challenges now and in the years to come, and what is the state of play regarding existing policies in Europe to tackle these challenges. The event's conclusions will feed into the work of the EESC and the opinions it will prepare on the different policy topics.

In spring-summer 2023, the different Sections of the EESC will work on the opinions, led by Members and Delegates of the EESC and reaching out to European civil society, the other EU institutions and key stakeholders in this field.

October 2023 will see a High-level conference, where the EESC will formally adopt its umbrella opinion and a Declaration, **calling on the European Commission for an "EU Blue Deal"**: a radical effort to anticipate needs and to preserve and adequately manage water-related challenges through a comprehensive and coordinated roadmap, setting ambitious targets and actions linked to agreed milestones. One of the aims of the EESC is to have water adopted as one of the priorities of the European Commission for its next mandate starting in 2024.

Follow-up actions will take place in 2023-2024 and beyond to ensure that the water dimension will be embedded in every policy area. The EESC is committed to ensuring that the EU delivers on this topic which is of vital importance to European citizens. The EESC is ready to work together with European civil society and with the EU institutions to make the EU Blue Deal a reality.

More information:

[EESC: Blue Deal](#)

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/eubluedeal>



[Time for a Blue Deal: February 27 high-level hearing](#)

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/time-blue-deal>

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